



HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Dan Donovan (R-NY) Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications Subcommittee

"Securing our Communities: Federal Support to High-Risk Urban Areas"

April 23, 2018

Remarks as Prepared

When I first met with then-Speaker John Boehner as a newly elected Congressman in 2015, I made one request – I wanted a seat on the Homeland Security Committee. I wanted to serve on a Committee that addressed so many topics near and dear to my constituents and my city. I later was honored when Chairman Michael McCaul approached me to become the Chairman of this Subcommittee. Every day, I get to work on homeland security issues and advocate for resources to help our first responders and strengthen New York City's and our Nation's preparedness. It has been a challenging but fulfilling responsibility.

My Subcommittee has made great progress in giving our first responders a voice on Capitol Hill. But the work is never done and that's why we are here today to meet and discuss an important topic that not only affects our constituents, but the entire nation – Federal support to high risk metropolitan areas.

On September 11, 2001, the nation watched as al Qaeda attacked New York City and Washington, DC by turning planes into weapons. Fast forward to the present day and New York City and all that it represents remains the number one terrorist target in the world, experiencing 5 additional attacks. And I would be remiss if I didn't mention the hard work of federal, state, and New York City officials to thwart dozens of other serious plots.

Just last year, first responders reacted bravely as terrorists attacked our city with a pipe bomb and a truck. We are forever grateful to the fine men and women at the NYPD, FDNY, and the Port Authority Police that ran towards these situations without giving it a second thought and saved countless lives. It is because of them and the dedicated and tireless professionals of NYC Emergency Management that New York City has become a stronger, more resilient, and secure place.

New York City's finest and bravest, and other first responders across the Nation, arrive first to a disaster scene. Several Federal initiatives provide instrumental support to ensure our first responders can handle whatever threat they approach. The Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, through grants, intelligence information sharing, and joint task forces, have become the primary Federal agencies that interact with first responders. We are thankful for both agencies' work to help our first responders. In most cases, DHS and the FBI stand right beside our first responders during and after a terrorist attack.

DHS, through the Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A), and the FBI have attempted to create an information-sharing environment in which authorities disseminate accurate information in a timely manner and to the appropriate Federal, State, and local partners. We have made great progress in breaking down the information sharing stovepipes that haunted us after 9/11, but there seem to be reoccurring challenges regarding terror-related information sharing.

Information sharing is a two-way street, and I believe that the enhancements at both I&A and the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Forces have helped tremendously in creating a better flow of terrorism information between the Federal Government and State and local law enforcement. I'm interested in learning from our witnesses more about what needs to be done to create a fully integrated information sharing environment.

Ensuring first responders have information on the most recent terrorist tactics and other intelligence is only one part of the equation in protecting our homeland. The homeland security preparedness grants allow first responders to enhance and sustain their capabilities to protect their communities from the evolving terrorist threats we face.

Vital grant programs include the State Homeland Security Grant Program, Urban Area Security Initiative, Port Security Grant Program, and Transit Security Grant Program. Our Committee has repeatedly heard from first responders about the importance of these programs and the capabilities they have helped jurisdictions attain. In fact, just last week, the Committee held a hearing on the 5th anniversary of the Boston Marathon bombings and the recent Austin serial bombings. Law enforcement representatives from Boston and Austin repeatedly emphasized how federal homeland security grant programs aided in their response efforts to these attacks. And I am certain we will hear similar sentiments from witnesses on our second panel today.

This Committee fully supports these programs, and the Committee's DHS Authorization bill includes provisions from my legislation, the PREPARE Act, which authorize robust funding for these programs. I am pleased the House overwhelmingly passed this legislation last year and I urge the Senate to take action on it without further delay.

In the nearly 17 years since 9/11, we have made great progress in hardening our defenses against terrorists who wish to do us harm. Unfortunately, they are not giving up and neither can we.

I want to thank all of the witnesses for coming to Staten Island and I look forward to our discussion about how we can continue to secure our great nation.

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